



## Alaska Office of Boating Safety Receives National Recognition



Boating Law Administrator Jeff Johnson (center) was inducted into the National Boating Safety Hall of Fame.



The Alaska Office of Boating Safety staff (L-R) Joe McCullough, Kelli Toth, Jeff Johnson

The Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation's Office of Boating Safety received three awards at the 2017 conference of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA).

Education Specialist Kelli Toth was named the 2017 National Boating Safety Educator of the Year, the highest level of achievement among boating safety educators in the U.S. Since Kelli joined the Office of Boating Safety in 2011, more than 75,761 students attended Kids Don't Float education program classes. "In a profession where outstanding work is the standard, Kelli's passion and dedication are above exemplary," said Alaska State Parks Director Ethan Tyler.

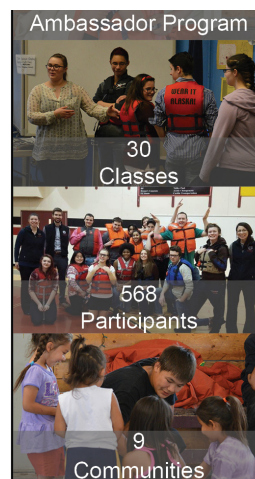
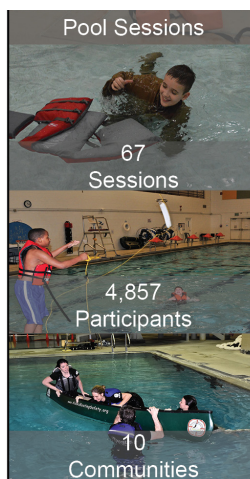
The Office of Boating Safety also won the NASBLA Innovations Award for its 'Float Coat Song' Initiative. The award is presented to a program or initiative that demonstrates the highest level of innovation, leading to advances in boating safety. The annual award spotlights exemplary state, corporate, or public-private partnership programs, and encourages sharing these initiatives with other agencies and recreational boating safety stakeholders.

Boating Law Administrator Jeff Johnson was inducted into the National Boating Safety Council's National Boating Safety Hall of Fame. Inductees are chosen from among those who have demonstrated vital leadership and support through many years of service to boating safety. "Jeff was the State of Alaska's first official Boating Law Administrator in 1998. Credit is due to Jeff for the establishment and the many successes of the Alaska Boating Safety Program," said Ethan.

"These awards from NASBLA are the result of years of tireless work and amazing passion for protecting and educating Alaskans," Ethan said.



## Kids Don't Float 2017 Recap



As this year comes to an end, the Alaska Office of Boating Safety crunched some numbers and found that the three elements of their 2017 Kids Don't Float program—pool sessions, the ambassador program, and classroom presentations—did remarkably well spreading lifesaving knowledge.



## Mat-Su Minute

### Gold Cord Mine Tour

In early October, park staff were treated to a tour the Gold Cord Mine operations by owner Dan Renshaw. The Gold Cord Mine is just uphill from Independence Mine State Historical Park. A mining engineer, Renshaw is also a respected historian and story-teller about the Willow Creek Mining District during its heyday. Staff got to peek inside Renshaw's latest underground workings and toured a fully restored 1940s ball mill used to crush and separate ores.



(L-R) Ranger Damon Hampel, Dan Renshaw, Diane Harris, Heather Langendorf, Ranger Dan Amyot, Hobbies Barber, Wayne Biessel

### Avy Savvy in Hatcher Pass

In mid-October, volunteers from the Hatcher Pass Avalanche Center and park staff installed three new avalanche beacon test stations at key points in the East Hatcher Pass Management Area. Families who were impacted by loss of life during the 2015 winter avalanche season donated the funds for purchasing the test stations. The stations include a sensor that detects the strength of avalanche beacon signals, giving backcountry travelers some assurance that their beacons are working properly.



(L-R) Ryan Jones, Ralph Baldwin, Jordan Bancroft, Mylise Meyers Bennet, Mark Spencer, Danielle Reed, Jed Workman



(L-R) Ranger Mario Pagni, Jordan Bancroft, Jed Workman, Ranger Dan Amyot, Mark Spencer





## Kachemak Bay Roundup

Public Lands Day celebration at Dimond Creek State Recreation Area in Homer



Ranger Jason Okuly and rock star volunteer Kathy Sarns who contributed over 65 volunteer hours this past season



Rep. Paul Seaton presents retired District Ranger Roger McCampbell with a legislative proclamation honoring his 31 years of service.

## Celebrating Public Lands Day and Volunteers

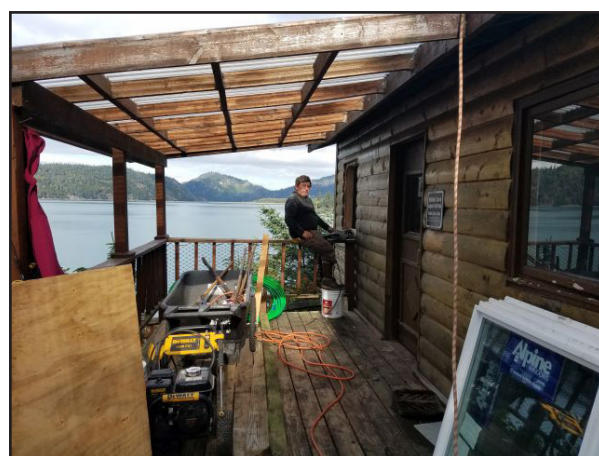
Friends of Kachemak Bay State Parks and Alaska State Parks hosted a picnic at Dimond Creek State Recreation Area in Homer to celebrate all the great work volunteers do for public lands. This year, nearly 100 volunteers contributed roughly 5,000 hours of service maintaining and developing trails, cleaning up trash, repairing public-use cabins, and leading guided hikes in Kachemak Bay State Park. During the celebration, which included grilled hotdogs and story swapping, Rep. Paul Seaton presented retired District Ranger Roger McCampbell with a legislative proclamation honoring Roger's 31 years of service to State of Alaska. The event wrapped up with a hike to the beach led by author, photographer, geologist, and volunteer Taz Tally.

## Kachemak Cabins

Cabin maintenance volunteers assist Ranger Brad Garasky installing new windows, performing general maintenance on the stove, applying fresh paint, clearing vegetation, and installing slip protection on our elevated walkways.



Cabin maintenance volunteer Bill Hague



Cabin maintenance volunteer Glen Hollowell

**PICK UP  
YOUR 2018  
PARK PASSES TODAY!**





## Northern News



Alaska State Parks has been busy making improvements at Chena Pump State Recreation Site on the Tanana River in Fairbanks this fall. Visitors now have access to a toilet, picnic tables, fire pits, and improved roads and parking areas.



Alaska State Parks Director Ethan Tyler and Ranger Dane Happ take a break at Lower Angel Creek Public-Use Cabin while snow machining in Chena River State Recreation Area.



**Left:** After 15 years of being privately managed, the Chena River State Recreation Site will be managed directly by Alaska State Parks this year. The site's proximity to the Fairbanks Regional Office will allow Fairbanks Park Rangers to effectively manage the area and oversee operations with volunteer assistance. The facility underwent improvements in 2011 that included a new boat launch and was set up this fall with electricity to the sites, which will greatly enhance the camping experience for the facility's visitors.

## New Northern Region Public-Use Cabins



The Donnelly Creek Cabin is located at Donnelly Creek State Recreation Site, 30 miles south of Delta Junction and is now available for reservations.



The Delta Public-Use Cabin is located at the Delta State Recreation Site, half a mile north of Delta Junction.



## Mt. McKinley Princess Wilderness Lodge Naturalist Program

Every year, Alaska State Parks' Interpretation and Education unit partners with Holland-America Princess to provide a naturalist program at the Mt. McKinley Princess Wilderness Lodge in Denali State Park. From May to September, almost 13,000 guests attended guided programs in the form of nature walks and theater presentations. Thousands of visitors who stayed at the lodge sat by the fireplace and perused the Denali State Park brochure, sometimes learning for the first time that there is a state park in addition to the national park in the Denali region.



**Left:** The two naturalists, LaVina Preston and Sherri Arias, staff the naturalist desk at the lodge.



**Right:** Sherri Arias leads a guided nature walk on the Lodge Trail.

## First Day Hikes

Alaska State Parks will be participating in the seventh annual nationwide First Day Hike event sponsored by America's State Parks next year. On New Year's Day, all 50 states and Canada will be offering free, guided First Day Hike programs. These hikes provide a way for individuals and families to welcome the coming year in the outdoors, exercising and connecting with nature and each other. Last year nearly 55,000 people rang in the New Year, collectively hiking over 133,000 miles throughout the country on the guided hikes.

Events planned for the 2018 First Day Hike in Alaska include skiing, snowshoeing, and hiking in state parks near Delta Junction, Homer, Sitka, Ketchikan, and Juneau. If you are interested in participating in an event in Alaska or another state, you will find all the details on the America's State Parks web page <http://www.stateparks.org/initiatives-special-programs/first-day-hikes/>.



## New Eshamy Bay Park Unit Cabin

Director Ethan Tyler joined Kenai/Prince William Sound Region staff on a trip to Eshamy Bay in early November. Ethan stands next to District Ranger Jacques Kosto as they look for a future public-use cabin site. The site is in the Prince William Sound district and was purchased for habitat protection by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council. The cabin is tentatively scheduled to be completed in fall next year.





## Kodiak Corner



A Kodiak bear is photographed fishing at Buskin River State Recreation Area. The Buskin River receives a large salmon return and is Kodiak's most popular fishing destination on the road system. A bad berry crop in Kodiak this summer led to an increase in bear fishing activity and increased bear/human conflict.



To reduce the risk of bear conflicts on the river, Kodiak area's park rangers worked with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to develop and post signs to inform anglers about proper fishing etiquette in bear country.

## ★ Chugach Chronicle



**Left:** Division Operations Manager Matt Wedeking presents Chugach Area Superintendent Tom Harrison with a gold pan honoring 11 years of service to and leadership in Alaska State Parks at his retirement party in September. We wish him the best as he embarks on new adventures.

## BABY SAMUEL

★ Congratulations to Ranger Ben Corwin and his wife Katie who welcomed a new baby boy, Samuel Sawyer, early last month!

## Onward and Upward!

The Office of History and Archaeology wished Caitlan Dowling farewell in October. Caitlan worked at OHA for three years, making maps and doing much more. She moved OHA into social media, greatly improved the website, and helped with the commemorative activities for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Alaska Treaty of Cession. Caitlan took a GIS mapping position with the U.S. Navy and moved to San Diego at the end of October. Best wishes, Caitlan!

